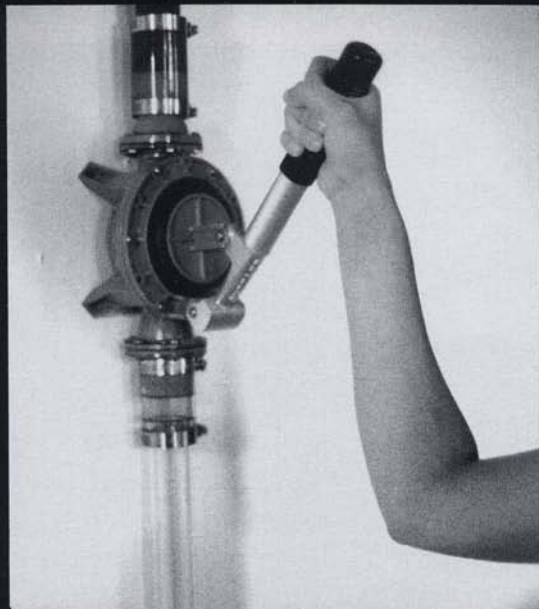


**H A L L W A L L S**

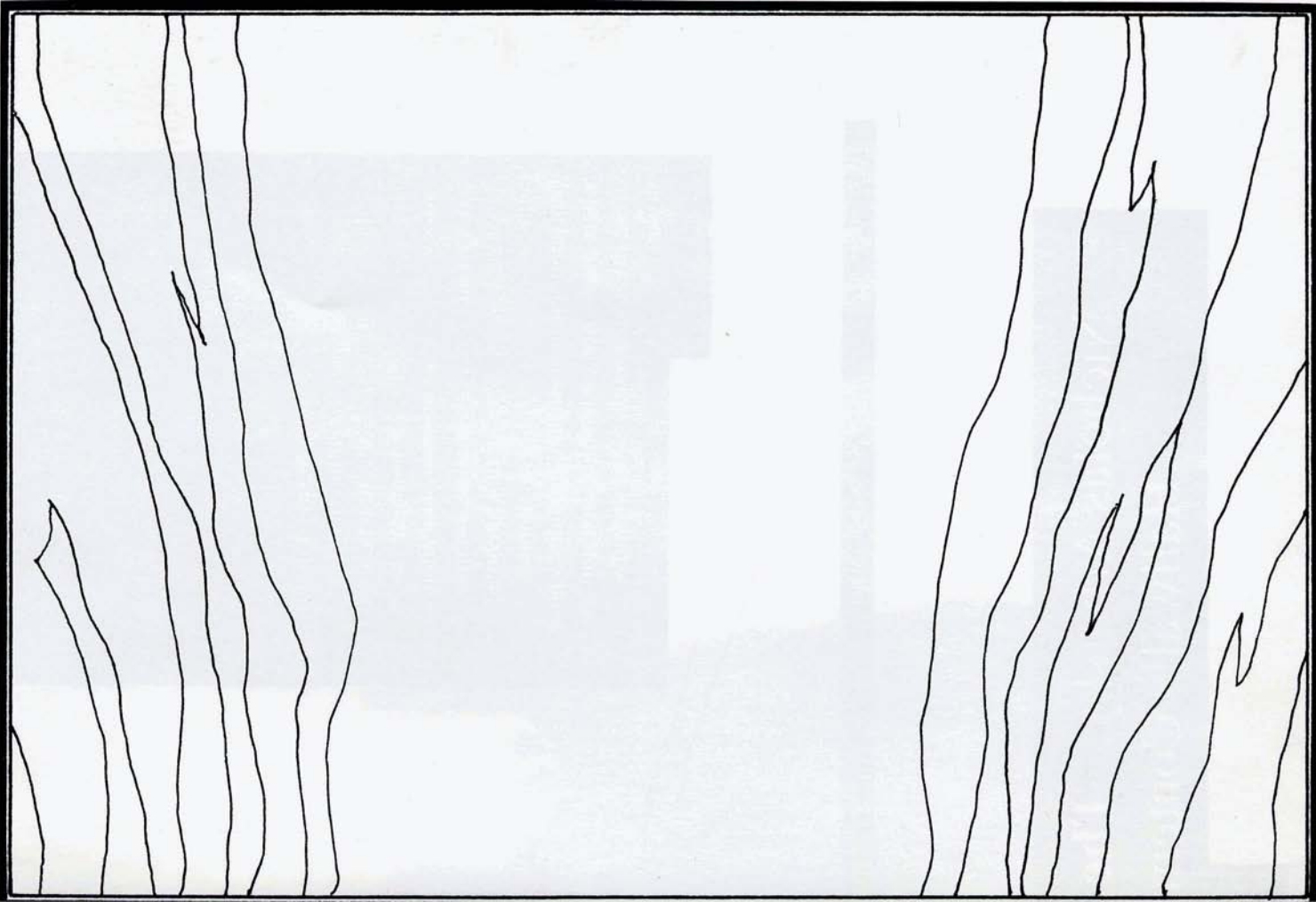
**CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER**

700 MAIN STREET, BUFFALO, NY 14202



Nicholas Arbatsky

**The Romance of Fuel-Injected Flesh. Project Room: September 18-October 29, 1993.**



**MORRIS LOUIS**

American, 1912-1962

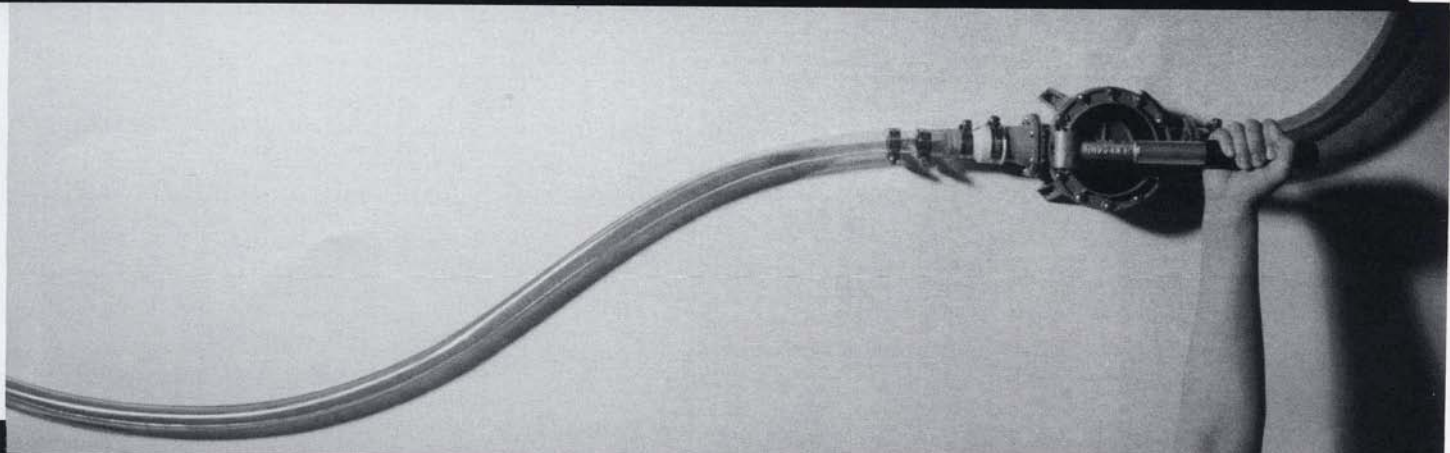
***Alpha, 1960***

Acrylic resin paint on canvas,

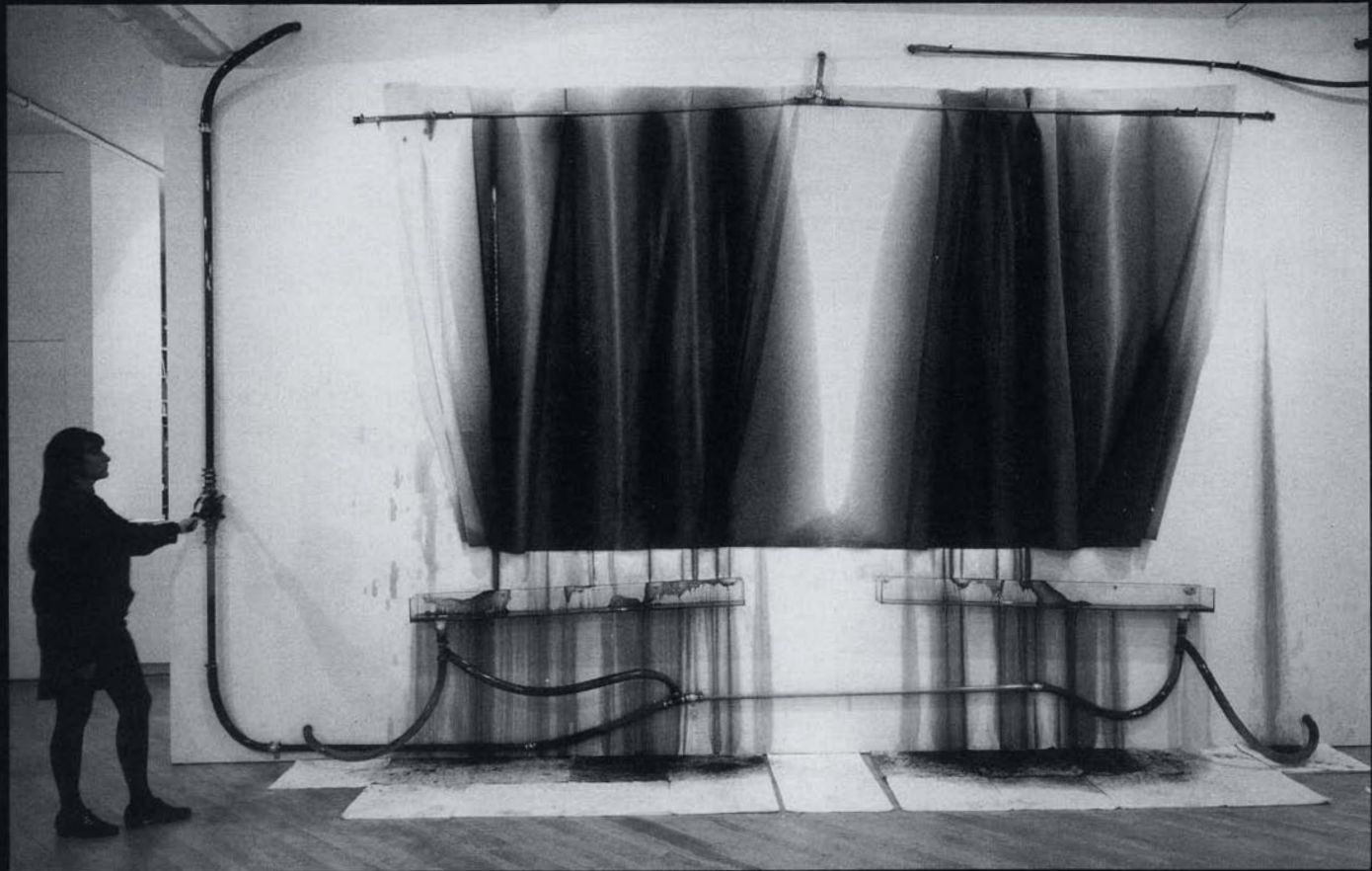
105 1/2" x 145 1/2"

ALBRIGHT-KNOX  
ART GALLERY

A coloring page inspired by Louis' canvas *Alpha* from the collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. This interpretation is presented to allow you to create a work of art at your convenience, using media of your choice.



Nicholas Arbatsky. Detail from *The Romance of Fuel-Injected Flesh*. 1993.



Nicholas Arbatsky, Detail from *In the Silence of 16 Valves Running*, 1993. Installation at Josh Baer Gallery, New York City.



Morris Louis poured and Nicholas Arbatsky allows you to pump, that and fifty years separate them. We learn from Janson's *History of Art* that after Action Painting was "spent," Louis and some of the other "movement" artists created color-field painting, "in which the canvas is stained with thin, translucent color washes".<sup>1</sup> If you go to Hallwalls you can make your own Louis courtesy of Arbatsky (make sure to have lunch at the Knox first), simply grip the plastic handle and squeeze: an orgasmic rush of goo, recycled from the post-industrial waste of a once great manufacturing center, rushes down and saturates the canvas. As many critics have noted the veils of color in Louis appear to be floated on without any marks of the brush.<sup>2</sup> In Arbatsky a similar effect can be said to be oozed out, and the slight squeeking noise as the viscous liquid is pumped through the holes effectively illustrates that the oil has been changed.

Both Louis and Arbatsky ended up in Buffalo, actually Louis never set foot in Buffalo, but *Alpha* is in the collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. What would Louis have thought of *The Romance of Fuel-Injected Flesh*? It's hard to say. Possibly since he fails to merit mention in the highlights of the Knox collection he would have been pleased by this homage.<sup>3</sup> In any case we know what Arbatsky said about Louis and Buffalo, "Louis' paintings combine the philosophical opposite of whitebread with the silence of 204 horses running. Our intersecting in Buffalo provides a point where production and sublimation join forces in the rhythmic motion of the viewer's stroke."<sup>4</sup>

About Louis and *Alpha* we know from the most informative source, the coloring book, that it is but one of 120 unfurled paintings that Louis created in the space of 16 months. Thomas A. Gerbracht goes on to say that "*Alpha* is one example where the canvas is stained by bright acrylic paint which was poured in channels created by folding the canvas. Here, the colors mirror each other, creating a triangle of canvas which appears to be both squeezed and pulled away from the color."<sup>5</sup> We are surprised to learn that Louis was influenced by both Jackson Pollock as well as fellow color-fieldists Helen Frankenthaler and Kenneth Noland.

When Morris Louis died he had only four one-artist exhibitions on his resume; this is Nicholas Arbatsky's first exhibition in Buffalo. Neither artist wants you to get too close. The Albright-Knox has conveniently furnished Louis with protective metal railings and guards. Arbatsky has made his own railings as well as an oil-filled velvet rope, denying the pleasure of fingerprints on the blank walls. The experience of one of Louis' veil paintings has been likened to the presence of the aurora borealis. The pumping hand that sends oil pulsing over the languorously draped canvases that flow across *The Romance of Fuel-Injected-Flesh* might be compared to a less heavenly phenomena.

Andrew Perchuk is the Harold Rosenberg Curator of Post-Painterly Abstraction at the Alternative Museum in New York.

Nicholas Arbatsky. *Posthumous Veil*, 1991.

<sup>1</sup> H.W. Janson, *History of Art*, 1977.  
<sup>2</sup> Clement Greenberg, *Morris Louis, 1912-1962*, 1967.  
<sup>3</sup> Michael Auping in Association with the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, *Abstract Expressionism: The Critical Developments*, 1987.  
<sup>4</sup> From an interview with the artist entitled *Visual Pleasure*, 1993.  
<sup>5</sup> Thomas A. Gerbracht, Albright Knox Art Gallery Coloring Book, 1993.

**Nicholas Arbatsky The Romance of Fuel-Injected Flesh.**  
**Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center: Project Room.**  
**September 18-October 29, 1993.**